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AUTHOR	Watford, Robert; Hawke, Sharryl
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ABSTRACT

"Redesigning the Community" is the ninth grade unit of the University City school district program known as Arts in General Education, a K-12 series of special instructional units taught as part of the regular subject areas of language arts and social studies. In social studies the main focus is on environmental design and planning. In this ninth grade social studies unit, students explore some general concepts of culture through general readings. Then a more in-depth look at a city's relationship to culture is presented through the use of slides and literature. Next, students are introduced to specific aspects of urban design and begin a study of the home community. The culmination experience of the unit is a student activity project in which a specific aspect of University City is chosen for redesign. Three student projects described focus on the zoo, adequate housing, and community worship facilities. At the completion of the projects, students present proposals to a review board composed of class members and moderating teacher for critical appraisal of functional and aesthetic factors of the plans. Student evaluation measures are included with each of the 19 lesson guides. Teachers' assessments, provided on a form at the end of each of four lessons, contribute to annual modification of the program. Instruction units for the entire Arts in General Education Project and the 19 lessons of "Redesigning The Community" are listed. (KSM)

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studies in the environment: Redesigning the Community

"What can be done to reduce the rising rate of air pollution in our community?" the students asked. After study and thought, their answer was to propose a new form of rapid transit. In designing the new transit system, they first assessed the transportation needs of the community. They considered the commuter's needs and how his daily trips to work, shop, or play could be made more pleasant. A route plan, which assured that the persons living in suburbia as well as in the inner city would be adequately served by the system, was developed. Cars and rails were designed to be functional and pleasant for the users of the system. Finally, the students looked at the overall aesthetics of the transit system and sought to produce a structure which would enhance the appearance of the community. When the project was complete, the students submitted their proposal to a review board for consideration.

Though this project may sound like the undertaking of a college class in environmental engineering, it was actually the work of ninth-grade students in University City, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. The students completed this project as part of a unit of study entitled "Studies in the Environment: Redesigning the Community." Rapid transit is just one of many subjects that have been tackled by junior high students during the five years that the unit has been taught.

For the students of the University City school system, "Redesigning the Community" is not an isolated study, but part of a school district program known as Arts in General Education. Beginning with elementary students and continuing through twelfth grade, the Arts in General Education program seeks to provide all students with an understanding and appreciation of the arts. To meet this goal, a comprehensive curriculum consisting of 14 instructional units has been developed by a staff of teacher-specialists, under the direction of Stanley J. Madeja. The social studies units were designed by Rose Marie Banks. Support for the development and implementation of the program was provided by the JDR (John D. Rockefeller) 3rd Fund, Inc., the University City School District, and the Central Midwestern Educational Laboratory, Inc. (CEMREL), St. Ann, Missouri.

The Arts in General Education staff believes that art is not an exclusive discipline that should only be taught in "art" class. Instead they maintain that all disciplines--language, social studies, science--have aesthetic components which provide a natural basis for teaching understanding and appreciation of many art forms. The Arts in General Education curriculum, as ultimately developed by the University City staff, is not a separate art curriculum, but a series of special instructional units which are taught as part of the regular curriculum. Language arts and social studies were chosen as the two major subject areas in which to concentrate the arts program. In language arts the main emphasis is on theater and dramatic arts; in social studies the main focus is on environmental design and planning. A complete list of units developed for the Arts in General Education program is shown in the box below.

SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE ARTS

Five years ago when the instructional units for *Arts in General Education* were being designed, concern for the environment existed but was not as widespread as it is today. Nevertheless, the teachers who were developing the social studies units saw a clear need to introduce students to environmental concerns, by relating the existing social studies curriculum to these concerns. They also wanted to expand the social studies curriculum to include study of the aesthetic aspects of the environment as part of larger social issues. A major objective was to "...make the social studies curriculum relevant to students in our rapidly changing technological age by helping each student develop a critical attitude toward the sensory qualities of his environment."

The first arts unit implemented in the social studies curriculum was "Studies in the Environment: Redesigning the Community." Several more units have been added to the social studies curriculum at various grade levels. "The Nature Scroll" for third and fourth grades brings together a variety of resources in music and art to broaden nature study; "A Gateway to the West" introduces fifth and sixth graders to urban design concepts and their effect upon a city's appearance and function; in "St. Louis, the River, and the Arts," students learn about their own city's historical and cultural aspects. These units were designed to be taught in sequence from grades four through nine, but they are flexible enough for each school to order the sequence to meet its own needs.

REDESIGNING THE COMMUNITY

"Redesigning the Community" is used primarily with ninth-grade youngsters and draws on the concepts they learn in their previous arts studies. The unit is composed of 19 sequential lessons.

Students begin the unit by exploring some general concepts of culture. Through selected readings, students study the components of culture and determine how the culture of a people influences the planning and development of their environment.

This general study of culture is followed by a more in-depth look at cities and how a city reflects the culture of its people. To understand how a city grows and adapts to its inhabitants' needs, students are shown slides of their own city of St. Louis and asked to explain what the slides show about the needs of the people of St. Louis. Suburban growth and its influence on the central city is considered. A more poetic view of cities is presented by reading poetry written about various cities.

Based on their study of the city, students are introduced to specific aspects of urban design. Cultural influences, resource availability, technological capabilities, and aesthetic preferences are discussed as elements of urban planning. Students see slides and pictures of cities all over the world--Yoruba in Africa, Amsterdam, Tunis, Peking, the bedroom community of Levittown, Pennsylvania--and are asked to consider how the culture of each city's inhabitants has affected its urban design.

With this general background, students begin a study of their home community, University City. They start with a tour of the community, using maps to explore both business and residential areas. They concentrate on one particular aspect of community life, such as eating establishments, churches, or recreational facilities. In their tour students are asked to consider elements of planning and design in their community, but they are also directed to consider the quality of life that is found there.

Following their community tours, students are introduced to various people from the community who can provide more information about specific aspects of urban design in University City. The community's city planner may speak on urban planning and why it is necessary. Representatives of the utility companies and the parks and recreation department explain to students the functions and concerns of their organizations. Architects who have designed specific city buildings, such as the University City library, may give insight into considerations made in planning such buildings.

The culminating experience of "Redesigning the Community" is a student activity project. Using what they have learned about urban planning, students are asked to choose a specific aspect or area of University City and redesign it to make it both pleasing and functional for the city's residents. Projects may be undertaken individually, but most students prefer to work in groups. The results of their study are to be presented to the class in some form of visual display. The displays have included slide/tape shows, collages, models built from styrofoam and papier-mâché, and simulated magazine cover stories complete with photographs. A project which dealt with rapid transit was described at the beginning of this *Profile*; descriptions of three other projects follow in the next section.

When projects are completed, students present their proposals to a review board composed of class members with the teacher serving as moderator. The review board studies each proposal and makes a critical appraisal of both the functional and aesthetic aspects of the plan. For example, in appraising the rapid transit proposal, the review board felt the idea might be impractical because of the amount of money it would take to build such a system.

Teachers who have used the unit in their classes report that when students first began to act as reviewers of the projects they were inclined to be more critical of the students presenting the projects than of the projects themselves. However, as students begin to better understand environmental concepts, they are able to focus on the proposals without considering the personalities of the students involved.

In some classes, the student projects have been displayed for persons outside the school setting, such as the architecture department at Washington University, the school board, and the community planner for University City.

THREE PROJECTS

A New Zoo

One of the most famous landmarks in the St. Louis area is the Forest Park Zoo, which is located in the western part of the metropolitan area, near University City. The students who studied the zoo for their final project in "Redesigning the Community" felt that the geographic location of the zoo prevented many people--especially those in outlying areas--from going to the zoo. They proposed that it be more centrally located within metropolitan St. Louis.

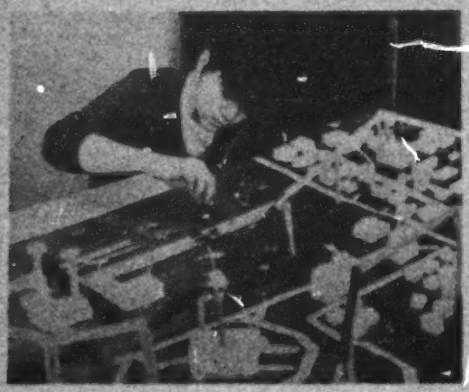
A new location for the zoo was not the end of their plans. Using milk cartons, clay, and styrofoam, the group designed a model zoo which would be both functional and pleasant. They also wanted it to be educational as well as recreational. They proposed having all cars and individual transportation banned from the zoo, suggesting that such vehicles were dangerous to both visitors and animals. A system of man-made waterways, islands, boats, and natural habitats was presented to the review board. The proposed zoo would be accessible to the total community and every person would find something of interest--opera, study of aquatic life and reptiles, or a museum.

Arts in General Education display

Students use map and model to study University City.

Students design a model neighborhood.

Group projects sometimes require a large working area.



Putting the final touches on an individual project.

In studying the zoo plan, the class review board pointed out the impracticality of some of the suggestions. For example, if waterways were used instead of walkways, visitors at the zoo would have to take a boat from one place to another. Some children as well as some adults who are afraid of water would not be able to enjoy such a zoo. Animals might escape from their habitats. However, with these exceptions, the students were enthusiastic about the new zoo and felt it should be an exciting addition to the community.

Adequate Housing

Adequate housing has been a concern of many of the students who have taken the "Redesigning the Community" unit. One group of students undertook the problem of housing in University City as their final project. During their class tour of the community, these students came to feel that the most pressing housing need was for more diversity in the types of homes located in the area. Most of the homes were similar in appearance, with only different colors of paint to distinguish them. Students recommended that individuals be encouraged to design their own homes before building, so there would be more individuality in the neighborhoods and more pride of ownership among the residents. It was also suggested that duplexes, community homes, and homes for elderly citizens be added, so the community could better serve the needs of all the people. Students wanted some areas that were completely without commercial or business establishments.

For their visual display, the students decided to concentrate on one main thoroughfare in the community, Olive Street. They first presented a photographic essay which depicted some of the problems on Olive Street; then they made recommendations for correcting the problems. Some of the students in the group designed new buildings and built models of the buildings with styrofoam blocks.

The student board that reviewed the project pointed out that restrictions on facilities in some neighborhoods could cause difficulties for residents who got too creative in designing their own homes. And, as with most of the projects, they were concerned with the financing of some of the building proposals.

House of Worship

Five students in one class proposed a "House of Worship" which would house churches and synagogues under one roof. The designers reasoned that synagogues were used mostly on Saturdays and sat empty on Sundays, while most Christian services were conducted on Sunday leaving the building unused during the rest of the week. Students felt that better use of a structure could be made by combining facilities into one building. They also hoped a single structure would promote the movement toward unity in religion.

In designing a building that would serve many religions, the students had to study the needs of the religions to be included. The model building constructed by the students allowed for specific requirements of each religion. In addition to building a model, some of the members of the group wrote essays for this project.

When the House of Worship plan was presented to the review board a lively discussion ensued. The board's major criticism of the proposal was that complex needs of different religious services made a single structure impractical.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of student performance is part of the "Redesigning the Community" unit. To help individual teachers assess student performance, the curriculum guide for the unit includes minimum standards of achievement with each of the 18 lesson guides. For example, in the first lesson a student is required to design and make a collage which shows different elements of culture. To meet minimum standards the student must "include at least four components of culture in his design." In Lesson 15 slides of selected sites in the community are shown. Minimum standard for acceptable performance is: "The student should include at least two reasons for both the function and aesthetic appeal of each site in seven out of ten slides."

A second type of evaluation is teacher assessment of the unit. Each teacher who uses "Redesigning the Community" is asked to evaluate the success of the unit concepts and materials with the particular group of students that she is teaching. At the end of each series of four lessons the teacher answers these questions.

1. Are any of the concepts unclear? If yes, explain.
2. Should any prerequisite concepts be specified for these lessons?
3. Are any of the concepts too difficult for the students? If yes, explain.
4. Do the objectives generally provide you with a basic frame of reference for guiding the lessons?
5. Are the activities and strategies in any of the lessons too difficult for the level of students?

nstructional Units in Arts in General Education Project

lementary
- The Circus
- The Untuts Scroll
- The Machine and the Arts
- Folktale
- Communication of Mood
- A Gateway to the West
- St. Louis, the River, and the Arts

unior High
- Redesigning the Community
- Industrial Design
- Communications Arts and Language
- Themes and Moods in Spanish Art

enior High
- Editing: A Way of Life
- The Enchanted Soul

-12
- Theatre Games File

6. Are any of the activities irrelevant to the concepts? If yes, explain.

7. Indicate on the scale the student's response to the activities of these lessons.

Do not like			Like very much	
1	2	3	4	5

8. Is there a sufficient amount of instructional material provided with these lessons?

9. Do you have access to the equipment necessary for use of instructional materials?

10. On the average, how much preparation time did you spend on each lesson?

Lesson 1_____ Lesson 2_____ Lesson 3_____ Lesson 4_____

11. Check the characteristics you feel best describe the assignments for these lessons.

a) __too difficult	__satisfactory	__too easy
b) __boring	__average	__fun for students
c) __irrelevant	__satisfactory	__very relevant

Based on the evaluations made by the participating teacher, modifications of "Redesigning the Community" have been made each year.

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

In a final report, *All the Arts for Every Child*, the staff of the *Arts in General Education* program cautions, "It is unrealistic to suggest that all units are of equal value, but it is even more unrealistic to suggest that any individual unit works well every time it is taught." In illustration of this point, two teachers who have used "Redesigning the Community" with their classes have had different results.

Mr. D., who used the unit with a class of seventh graders, found his students to be interested and attentive during the early stages of the class when studying the development of cities and looking at slides of their own community. However, when the material became more technical, especially with the introduction of the street grid maps, the children lost interest. In studying foreign cities, especially Peking, the students did not have sufficient knowledge of the cultures to be able to relate the urban design of the city to its culture. Interest revived again when students toured University City, but Mr. D. decided to end the unit without finishing the remaining lessons or undertaking the final project.

Ms. B., who has taught the unit to ninth graders, has had a different experience when using the material. She has observed a good interest level throughout the unit and has been pleased with the innovative results of many of the group projects. She reports, "Each class involved has been so thoroughly creative that, for the most part, no two groups of final products have been alike. So each time I teach the material it is like a new experience."

ERIC DOCUMENTS

ED 071 043 - *Field Trial of Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development and CEMREL Aesthetic Education Program.* Final Report. 128 pp. MF - $.65, HC - $6.58. Review of aesthetic education programs in 31 schools in three states; shows that little teacher training is necessary to produce successful programs.

ED 065 408 - *Environment and the Community: An Annotated Bibliography.* 70 pp. MF - $.65, HC - $3.29. Intended as a selection tool for laymen and professionals, this bibliography emphasizes the environment of American cities and communities. A bibliography of bibliographies is provided, as well as supplementary sources of information and guidance.

ED 059 883 - *Art Related Experiences for Social Science, Natural Science and Language Arts.* 24 pp. Available from ERIC/SMEAC, 1460 West Lane Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43221. A booklet intended to serve as an introduction to art experiences that relate to students in social science, natural science, and language arts.

ED 055 020 - *Project Canada West: How to Look at Your Urban World.* 37 pp. MF - $.65, HC - $3.29. Modular units designed to provide open-ended, student-directed investigations in the community. Unit titles include: 1) Portals: Points of Access; 2) Skylines and Profiles; 3) Focal Point and Landmarks; 4) Nodes: Strategic Points, Gathering Places; 5) Pathways: Streets, Rivers, Railroads; 6) Edges and Entities: City Segments; 7) Aura and Pulse: Total Sensual Impressions.

For more information concerning the subject of this paper, WRITE:

Ms. Rose Marie Banks
School District of University City
725 Kingsland Avenue
University City, Missouri 63130

Central Midwestern Regional Educational Laboratory, Inc. (CEMREL)
10646 St. Charles Rock Road
St. Ann, Missouri 63074

The JDR 3rd Fund, Inc.
50 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10020

"Redesigning the Community" was specifically designed for use by the University City schools. However, for teachers in other schools who might wish to initiate a similar program, a brief description of the lesson focus for the 19 lessons included in the unit is given below. Materials used are noted for Lessons 1 through 15. The activities in which the students engage are described for Lessons 16 through 19.

Lesson One--Focus: Concept of culture and its components.
Materials: Readings on culture.

Lesson Two--Focus: Concept of the city; contributions of ethnic groups.
Materials: Readings on St. Louis history and architecture.

Lesson Three--Focus: Problems of the city and possible solutions.
Materials: Filmstrip, "Cities U.S.A.;" readings.

Lesson Four--Focus: Relationship between a major city and suburbs.
Materials: Readings prepared by teachers.

Lesson Five--Focus: Community growth through land acquisition.
Materials: Outline map of community, transparencies.

Lesson Six--Focus: Culture of people as evidenced by their land use.
Materials: Maps showing city growth.

Lesson Seven--Focus: Urban design for a pleasing environment.
Materials: Slides of cities around the world.

Lesson Eight--Focus: Communities reflect values of a culture.
Materials: "Peking" booklet; Peking and China slides.

Lesson Nine--Focus: Architectual styles.
Materials: "A Look at America;" readings on architects.

Lesson Ten--Focus: Urban planning in primitive and medieval cities.
Materials: Slides of Zwolle and Save.

Lesson Eleven--Focus: Components of urban design in University City.
Materials: University City slides, notes on local architects.

Lesson Twelve--Focus: Effect of building materials on environment.
Materials: Filmstrip "Nature, Man, and Architecture;" slides of Yoruba and Amsterdam.

Lesson Thirteen--Focus: Central business area reflects community.
Activity: Tour of University City, slide/tape presentation by Urban Renewal Office speaker.

Lesson Fourteen--Focus: Planning is essential to community development.
Materials: "City Game" (prepared by teachers).

Lesson Fifteen--Focus: Factors which contribute to function and form of a city.
Materials: Slides of University City.

Lesson Sixteen--Focus: Residents' needs determine city development.
Activity: Students interview citizens to determine views on planning.

Lesson Seventeen--Focus: Unique problems in redesigning each community.
Activity: Each student lists the problems he sees in redesigning.

Lesson Eighteen--Focus: Unique problems in redesigning each community.
Activity: Guest speakers cite needs of various groups.

Lesson Nineteen--Culminating Activity: Student projects.